III-V AROUND III-Vs

Although electronics publications are devoted primarily to silicon activities, they do carry compound news as well. But, it was a bit baffling at http/www.eetasia.com in the RF/Wireless design corner to find this headline: *"It took me 26 years to think of how I should say it to my parents, but only a few seconds to deliver my line,"* followed by this abstract: "*Attempting to keep up with its rivals, Infineon Technologies AG has announced it would set up a corporate software group [focused on wireless development] in India, where the semiconductor supplier already has a research and development centre.*"
Now just what line did Infineon delivered to Siemens AG?

New fume hood design

For all that laboratories are the home of research, they do have some really neat efficiencies, as in a development from researchers at the US Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in Berkeley, CA.

They now believe they can save the US more than $1.5bn a year in electricity costs by updating that 60-year-old-design of the laboratory staple: the fume hood.

Researchers have come up with the estimate that there are close to a million fume hoods in the US, protecting high-school chemistry students and industry researchers alike by sucking up airborne chemicals, microbes, and particles.

But someone has also realised that the hoods also suck up a lot of power: a typical one using more energy each year than that of three homes!

The Berkeley Lab's new design involves small fans at the top and bottom of the hood opening. These create a curtain of clean air between the worker and the hazardous substances on the countertop.

Behind that curtain, a more powerful fan draws out contaminated air, in much the way a conventional hood's does, but because the fumes are already contained, the new system requires about a third of the previous airflow and therefore much less energy.

Berkeley Lab researchers and fume hood manufacturers are now field-testing the new design hoods in several operating laboratories.

Not for the EU paparazzi

On the look out for a clear view Swatch (the last having died after a decade of time-keeping) some gadget reviews highlighted the Swatch Paparazzi, which broadcasts MSN news, stocks, weather and sports (http://store.swatch.com/external/paparazzi/content htm).

It is available in four colours, a new chunky design and an extra-large size. Five function buttons in the case allow the wearer to navigate and control the watch functions. Waterproof, the timepiece comes with a lithium-ion rechargeable battery and a two-year warranty retailing for $150. Far less publicised is that these Swatch watches are only available in the US and - wait for it - Japan, thanks to Bill Gates and a Microsoft deal. It's slightly ironic really since Swatch's largest world market (bigger than the US) is actually Italy but they can't access Paparazzi. Perhaps they should fight the copyright of the name?

Quite a bit like Europeans trying to lay their hands on good quality SiC wafers, prohibitively priced and often unavailable from the US.

So it is with a slightly jaundiced eye that one looks on the feted 'arrival' of the Apple shop in Regent Street, London. From the news coverage it seems to be a strategic lure for US Apple shoppers, who can now combine overseas travel while safely shopping at 'home' stores. It will probably not change the decades' habit of UK's regular cockney pippins, as they make their traditional journey to the happy haunts of the Tottenham Court Road.

Alight with awards

Nice news on the award front is that Nick Holonyak has now been elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) "for his pioneering contribution to the realisation of high performance visible light emitting diodes and injection lasers based on ternary and quaternary compound semiconductors." The John Bardeen Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering and Physics at the University of Illinois was also selected as the 2004 Von Hippel Award winner by the Materials Research Society not so long ago.